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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV UNSC IZ KU

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE'S INTRODUCTORY MEETING WITH IRAQI
PR BAYATI

Classified By: AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE, FOR REASONS 1.4 B/D

¶1. (C) During a March 4 introductory meeting, Iraqi PR Hamid al-Bayati told Ambassador Rice that Iraq was eager for a "long-term strategic relationship with the U.S." He expressed his willingness to serve as an intermediary with the UN's group of Arab Ambassadors, and also offered to help assist as an intermediary with Iran. Ambassador Rice asked that Bayati and the Iraqi government encourage Iran to be more constructive in the region and in its relationship with Iraq. Bayati agreed, and said the Iran nuclear issue was of great concern to Iraq, since they shared a border and would be greatly affected if Iran developed a nuclear weapon capability.

¶2. (C) Bayati said the most important current issue for the Iraqi Mission to the UN was the review mandated by Resolution 1859 of all Security Council resolutions pertaining to Iraq. (Note: This UN review will likely be released to the Security Council in June. End note) He complained that Kuwait was "deliberately punishing the people of Iraq" by refusing to negotiate on the many legacy issues related to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, including the Compensation Committee, the missing Kuwaiti archives and persons, and border issues. Bayati said Kuwait was treating Iraq as if Saddam Hussein was still in power. He asked for U.S. assistance in convincing Kuwait to be more flexible. He also asked for U.S. assistance in improving Iraq's relations with the region, especially with Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Ambassador Rice said the U.S. was sensitive to Iraqi concerns, and emphasized that it was in the clear interest of the U.S. to strengthen and deepen the relationship between Iraq and its neighbors in the region.

Rice